



SWEETHEARTS

THRILLING NEW LOVE STORIES

Nº 32



Sweethearts

10¢

A CHARLTON PUBLICATION





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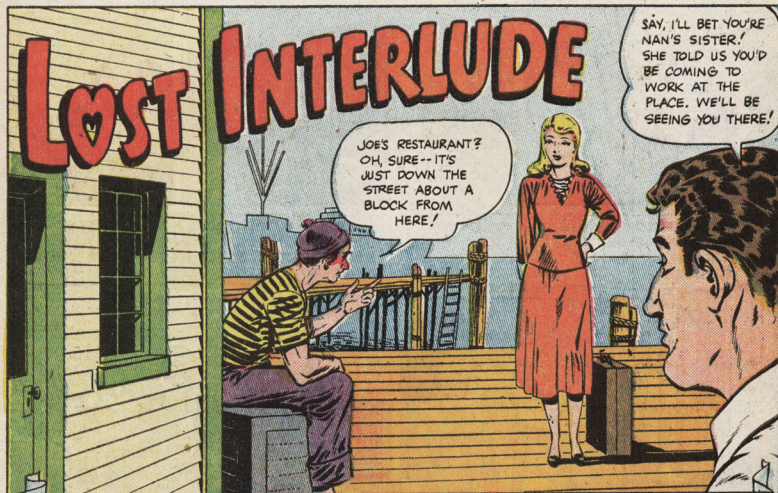
SWEETHEARTS

ATOMIC MOUSE ★ BADGE OF JUSTICE ★ BLUE BELLE ★ COWBOY JOE ★ GABBY HAYES ★
 ERN ★ DANGER AND ADVENTURE ★ FUNNY ANIMALS—MERRY MAILMAN ★ GABBY HAYES ★
 HOT RODS AND RACING CARS ★ LASH LE RUE ★ MONTE HALE ★ MY LITTLE MARGIE ★ ROCKY
 LANE ★ SIX-GUN HEROES ★ SOLDIER AND MARINE ★ SPACE ADVENTURES—ROCKY JONES,
 SPACE RANGER ★ SWEETHEARTS ★ TEX RITTER ★ This is SUSPENSE ★ TRUE LIFE SECRETS ★
 TV TEENS—DON WINSLOW of the NAVY ★ WIN-A-PRIZE ★ ZOO FUNNIES, NYOKA, JUNGLE GIRL

Every effort is made to ensure that our magazine contains the highest quality of wholesome entertainment.

A CHARLTON PUBLICATION

Alfred I. Lopez Executive Editor



IT IS ONLY RARELY THAT WE HEAR OF A LOVE SO HEART-GRIPPING, SO POIGNANT AND SPELLBINDING--THAT IT MOVES THE DREAMER TO REALITY, AND THE DISILLUSIONED TO NEW HOPE. SUCH A LOVE HAD BETTE KARRAN. ONE DAY, A STRANGER DRIFTED INTO HER LIFE-- A TALL, ROMANTIC STRANGER--AND SHE KNEW, SOMEHOW, THAT HE WAS THE ONE FOR WHOM SHE HAD LONG YEARNED. BUT COULD A COWERING, APPREHENSIVE HEART EMBRACE SO OVERPOWERING A LOVE?

IT WAS ONLY A SHORT WEEK AGO THAT NAN HAD SENT THE LETTER TO SLOEVILLE, THE SMALL TOWN WHERE SHE AND I HAD BEEN BORN AND RAISED. SHE HAD LEFT A YEAR BEFORE, AND NOW HER EXCITED, ENTHUSIASTIC HANDWRITING INFORMED ME OF HER MARRIAGE. SHE URGED ME TO COME TO THE CITY TO JOIN HER, WHEN I ARRIVED ---



SWEETHEARTS

AND IT WASN'T LONG BEFORE I'D SETTLED DOWN TO THE ROUTINE OF WORK AT JOE'S. I NEVER DID GET TO GO OUT MUCH, EXCEPT TO AN OCCASIONAL MOVIE WITH NAN...

ELEVEN-THIRTY! I WISH THE PLACE WERE CLOSED ALREADY, AND YET WHEN I GET HOME, I CAN'T THINK OF ANYTHING TO DO UNTIL IT OPENS AGAIN!



THE MONTHS PASSED, AND FOR ME, WITH THE DEEP, INAPPEASABLE ACHE OF LONELINESS--THE CITY WAS NOT MUCH OF A CHANGE AFTER ALL. THEN ONE DAY--ONE UNFORGETTABLE DAY--A STRANGER STEPPED RATHER HESITANTLY INTO THE PLACE. HIS CLOTHING WAS WORN AND DISHEVELLED, BUT SOMETHING IN HIS MANNER SEEMED SO WONDERFULLY DIFFERENT...

HE'S LIKE THE ROMANTIC LEAD OUT OF SOME MOVIE!



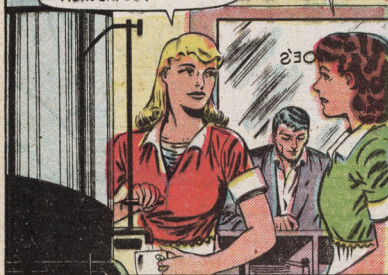
WHAT'LL IT BE?

COFFEE, PLEASE...



LOOK AT THAT FELLOW, NAN. HE'S OBVIOUSLY HAVING A HARD TIME OF THINGS NOW, BUT ISN'T HE WONDERFUL?

HE IS HANDSOME, ALL RIGHT!



ALMOST TREMULOUSLY, I GAVE HIM THE COFFEE HE ASKED FOR. HE ORDERED SOME MORE COFFEE AND HE ATE SOMETHING, TOO. BUT WHEN JOE WANTED HIM TO PAY UP, HE NODDED HIS HEAD RATHER BEWILDEREDLY--

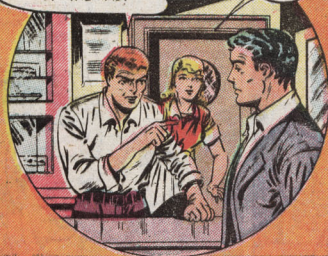
THAT'LL BE EIGHTY-FIVE CENTS!

I-I DON'T SEEM TO HAVE ANY MONEY!



LOOK, MAC--I CAN'T HAVE DRIFTERS COME AROUND AND PULL THAT SORT OF THING. I DON'T LIKE TO DO THIS, BUT MAYBE YOU'D BETTER HELP AROUND THE KITCHEN TO MAKE UP THE TAB.

BUT, JOE...



IT'S THE ONLY WAY TO STOP THIS KIND OF THING FROM GETTING OUT OF HAND, BETTE--I KNOW. SET HIM UP WITH A STACK OF DISHES IN THE BACK!

A-ALL RIGHT, JOE!

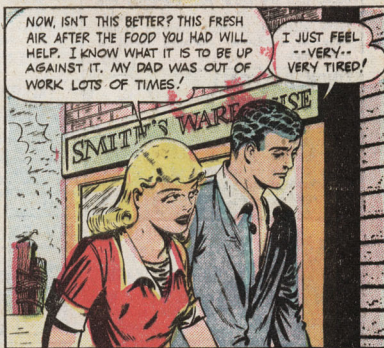


SWEETHEARTS

I KEPT RETURNING TO THE KITCHEN TO CATCH A GLIMPSE OF HIM AS HE WORKED ON THE DISHES AWKWARDLY, SLOWLY, JOE BECAME ANGRY WHEN HE THOUGHT HE WAS STALLING, AND I STEPPED INSTANTLY BETWEEN THEM WHEN I FELT THE STRANGER MIGHT BE HURT...



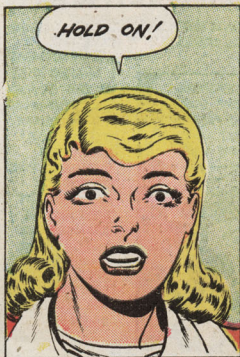
I FELT MY PULSES RACING AS I WALKED OUT BESIDE HIM. NAN SMILED AT ME JUST THE WAY SHE USED TO WHEN, AS A KID, I CARED FOR STRAY ANIMALS BACK HOME IN SLOEVILLE --



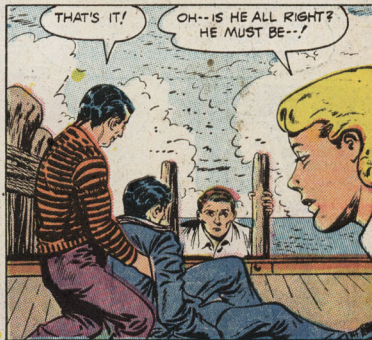
HE DIDN'T SAY MUCH--JUST A FEW WORDS. BUT EVEN THE WAY HE TALKED WAS DIFFERENT. --AS WE WALKED TOWARD THE WHARVES, ALL THE LONELINESS GATHERED UP INSIDE ME, AND I DID ALL THE TALKING. SUDDENLY, HIS KNEES SEEMED TO BUCKLE...



SWEETHEARTS



WITH TERROR CLUTCHING MY HEART, I CLAMBERED DOWN THE SIDE AND REACHED FOR HIM -- STRAINING WITH EVERY LAST OUNCE OF STRENGTH, I MANAGED TO HOLD HIS HEAD OUT OF WATER UNTIL OTHERS RESPONDED TO MY FRANTIC SCREAMS --



THEN, AS HE LAY THERE, UNCONSCIOUS IN MY ARMS -- HIS HANDSOME FACE SICK AND STRAINED, I WAS MOVED TO A SILENT PRAYER, THAT HE COULD REMAIN THERE FOREVER. I HAD JUST MET HIM AND YET I HAD A FEELING THAT WE MUST NEVER PART --



SWEETHEARTS

ONCE IN THE CAR, I KNEW MY DESTINATION WAS NOT THE HOSPITAL. AS THE HANDSOME STRANGER'S EYES TREMORED AND CLOSED IN A WEAK SLEEP...



HE DOESN'T REALLY NEED THE HOSPITAL. WILL YOU JUST DROP ME OFF AT MY PLACE, 28 MARKLEY? I'LL MANAGE ALL RIGHT THERE.

THE HOSPITAL SEEMS LIKE A WISE PRECAUTION -- BUT JUST AS YOU WISH!

THE MAN HELPED TAKE HIM TO THE APARTMENT. I SHARED WITH MY SISTER AND BROTHER-IN-LAW.

IN THERE WAS AN EXTRA ROOM. THE STRANGER WAS SUFFICIENTLY RECOVERED BY THEN AND HE CHANGED HIS CLOTHES FOR A PAIR OF JOE'S PAJAMAS. I RETURNED TO THE ROOM. THEN --



THERE -- ARE YOU COMFORTABLE NOW?

THIS HELPS A LOT -- THANKS.. THANKS AGAIN!



GO AHEAD, SLEEP. THAT'S WHAT YOU NEED MORE THAN ANYTHING. I-I'LL STAND BY IF YOU NEED ANYTHING!

I WAS DRAWN TO HIM IN A WAY I HAD NEVER BEEN DRAWN TO ANY OTHER HUMAN BEING. IT WAS AS THOUGH I HAD KNOWN HIM FAMILIARLY -- TO TALK WITH AND LAUGH WITH -- AND WEEP WITH, FOR A LIFETIME. THE HOURS PASSED AND STILL I KEPT MY VIGIL. THEN NAN CAME...



YOU SURE COULDN'T PICK A BETTER-LOOKING PATIENT, BUT YOU'RE SURE THIS ISN'T ANY-THING THAT NEEDS A DOCTOR'S ATTENTION?

HE'S JUST DOWN ON HIS LUCK, I GUESS. YOU KNOW, NOT ENOUGH FOOD, TOO MUCH SLEEPING OUT AND THE LIKE. HE'LL BE OKAY!



COME ON, HONEY...SUPPER'S ON THE TABLE. I KNOW YOU DIDN'T EAT BEFORE YOU LEFT THE RESTAURANT.

I'D BETTER STAY, IF HE WOKE UP, I'D NEVER HEAR HIM DOWN THE HALL!



OH-OH! NO YOU DON'T! HE'S NOT GOING TO RUN AWAY, AND YOU CAN LOOK IN BEFORE YOU GO TO SLEEP YOURSELF. SOMETHING TELLS ME THERE'S MORE TO THIS THAN JUST PLAYING THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

I-I DIDN'T THINK I COULD HIDE THE WAY I FEEL ABOUT HIM. AND I'VE JUST MET HIM...

SWEETHEARTS

I UNDERSTAND, HONEY -- THAT'S THE WAY IT HIT ME WHEN I MET JOE.

I CAN'T DESCRIBE THE FEELING BUT IT'S WONDERFUL.

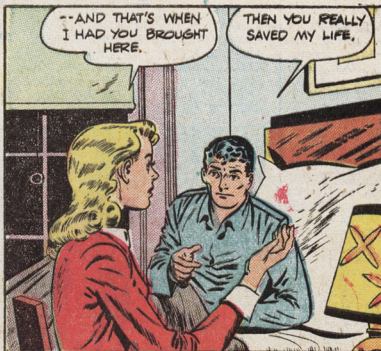


I COUNTED THE ANXIOUS MINUTES UNTIL THE NEXT MORNING, WHEN I RETURNED TO SEE HIM. HE HAD A LITTLE TROUBLE TRYING TO RECOLLECT, BUT THEN HE DID, AND MY HEARTBEAT HASTENED AT HIS WORDS OF THANKS AND HIS CAPTIVATING SMILE...



--AND THAT'S WHEN I HAD YOU BROUGHT HERE.

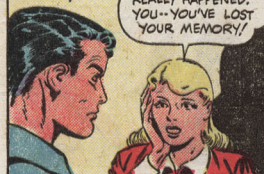
THEN YOU REALLY SAVED MY LIFE.



BUT THEN, WHEN I ASKED HIS NAME-- AND WHERE HE CAME FROM, HE DIDN'T SEEM TO KNOW...

THAT'S STRANGE, I--I JUST CAN'T SEEM TO REMEMBER ANYTHING ABOUT MYSELF.

I'VE READ ABOUT THINGS LIKE THIS AND SEEN IT IN THE MOVIES. BUT I NEVER THOUGHT IT REALLY HAPPENED. YOU--YOU'VE LOST YOUR MEMORY!



BUT DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT NOW. YOU NEED AS MUCH REST AS YOU CAN GET. PROBABLY TIREDNESS IS ALL THAT'S DOING IT.

MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT!



I'VE GOT TO GO TO WORK OVER AT JOE'S, BUT I'LL LOOK IN AS SOON AS I GET BACK. I'LL LEAVE EARLY. 'BYE, NOW!

SO LONG...



ALL DAY AT JOE'S, I HAD NO MIND FOR MY WORK. I THOUGHT ONLY OF THE STRANGER--WHO SEEMED A STRANGER NO LONGER IN MY HEART. THEN, ABOUT SEVEN, HE WALKED INTO THE PLACE! HE ORDERED COFFEE AND THEN HE STOPPED HIMSELF SHORT AND SMILED. JOE SMILED BACK AND...

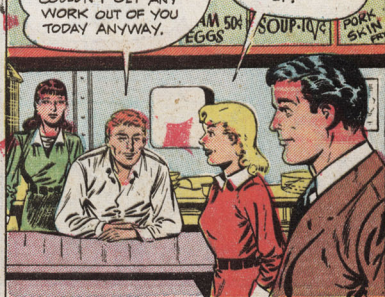
HERE YOU ARE, AND NO DISHES TO WASH THIS TIME! I SEE BETTE FIXED YOU UP WITH SOME OF MY CLOTHES. LOOK BETTER ON YOU THAN ON ME! FEELING OKAY, NOW?

STILL A LITTLE GROGGY, BUT GETTING CLEANED UP MAKES A DIFFERENCE.



YOU MAY AS WELL GO ALONG WITH HIM. I COULDN'T GET ANY WORK OUT OF YOU TODAY ANYWAY.

THANKS, JOE-- I'LL MAKE IT UP!

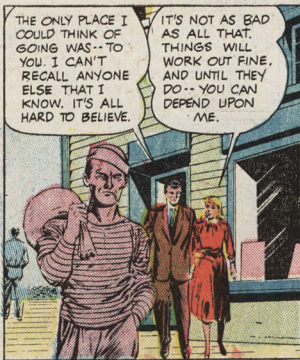


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I WALKED ALONG BESIDE HIM AND I HELD HIS ARM. SOMEHOW, IT SEEMED LIKE THE MOST NATURAL THING IN THE WORLD TO DO. HE STILL RECALLED NOTHING ABOUT HIMSELF, EXCEPT FOR THE INCIDENTS OF THE PREVIOUS DAY...

THE ONLY PLACE I COULD THINK OF GOING WAS-- TO YOU. I CAN'T RECALL ANYONE ELSE THAT I KNOW. IT'S ALL HARD TO BELIEVE.

IT'S NOT AS BAD AS ALL THAT. THINGS WILL WORK OUT FINE. AND UNTIL THEY DO-- YOU CAN DEPEND UPON ME.



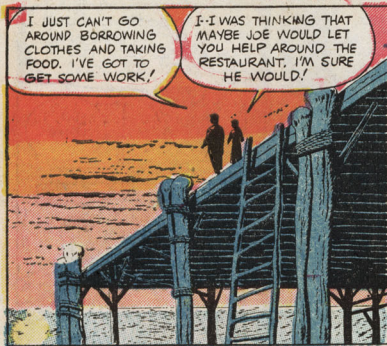
I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'D DO IF YOU WEREN'T AROUND. MAYBE I OUGHT TO GO TO A HOSPITAL ANYWAY.

NO-- ALL YOU NEED IS A LITTLE TIME. FORGET ABOUT THE HOSPITAL.



I JUST CAN'T GO AROUND BORROWING CLOTHES AND TAKING FOOD. I'VE GOT TO GET SOME WORK!

I-I WAS THINKING THAT MAYBE JOE WOULD LET YOU HELP AROUND THE RESTAURANT. I'M SURE HE WOULD.



HE TURNED TO ME THEN WITH AN EXPRESSION OF TENDERNESS AND I HOPED MORE AND MORE THAT HE WOULD FALL IN LOVE WITH ME---

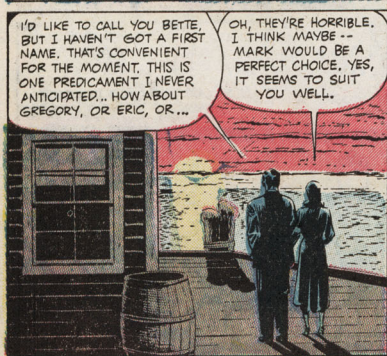
IF YOU DO ANOTHER THING FOR ME, I'LL BE BONDED TO YOU FOR A THOUSAND YEARS.

DON'T SAY ANOTHER WORD. LET'S JUST ENJOY THE BEAUTIFUL SUNSET. I'VE NEVER NOTICED IT TO BE AS VIVID BEFORE.



I'D LIKE TO CALL YOU BETTE, BUT I HAVEN'T GOT A FIRST NAME. THAT'S CONVENIENT FOR THE MOMENT. THIS IS ONE PREDICAMENT I NEVER ANTICIPATED... HOW ABOUT GREGORY, OR ERIC, OR...

OH, THEY'RE HORRIBLE. I THINK MAYBE-- MARK WOULD BE A PERFECT CHOICE, YES, IT SEEMS TO SUIT YOU WELL.



AND THERE ON THE PIER'S END, AS THE SUN DIPPED TO MEET THE DRIFTING TIDES, OUR HANDS TOUCHED, AND MY HEART PLEDGED AN UNSPOKEN VOW---

I SUPPOSE I OUGHT TO BE PRETTY FRANTIC ABOUT ALL THIS-- I MEAN, HAVING FORGOTTEN EVERYTHING. BUT HAVING MET YOU, BETTE-- MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE.

I'M GLAD YOU FEEL THAT WAY, MARK-- SO VERY GLAD!

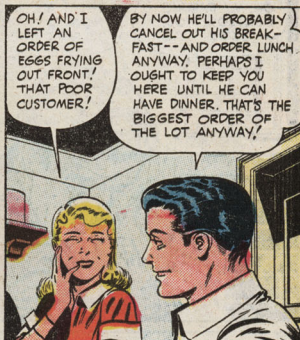
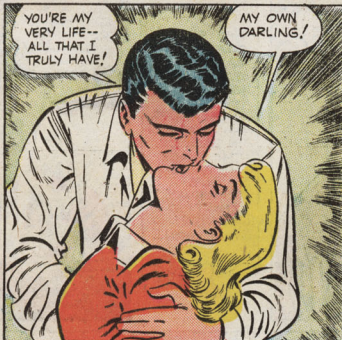


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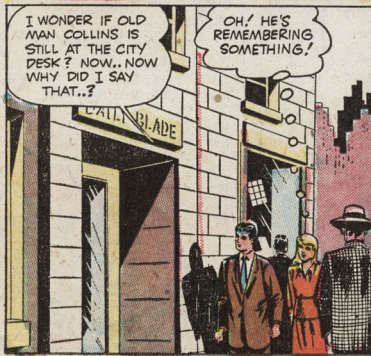
JOE WAS SWELL ABOUT HELPING OUT, DURING THE DAYS TO COME, MARK AND I WORKED SIDE BY SIDE, AND AS I HAD FERVENTLY HOPED AND PRAYED-- WE FELL IN LOVE. THE FIRST MEETING OF OUR LIPS WAS AS UNREHEARSED AS THE FALL OF RAIN...



AND THERE IN THE RESTAURANT KITCHEN, AMID THE MINGLED ODORS OF FOOD AND DISORDERLY ARRAY OF COOKING EQUIPMENT, A SINGLE KISS MAGICALLY CONJURED UP A HAVEN OF INCOMPARABLE ENCHANTMENT.

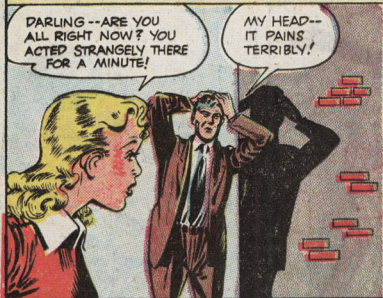


MARK'S NAME WHISPERED IN THE VERY AIR I BREATHED, AND HIS FACE SHONE IN THE FIRST RAYS OF MORNING. HE WAS MY EARLY STAR OF NIGHT-- AND THE PROMISE OF AN EVERLASTING SPRING! I LOVED HIM SO! BUT ONE FATE--DECLARED DAY, WE PASSED A NEWSPAPER BUILDING, AND...

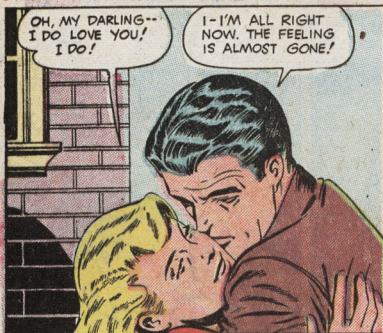


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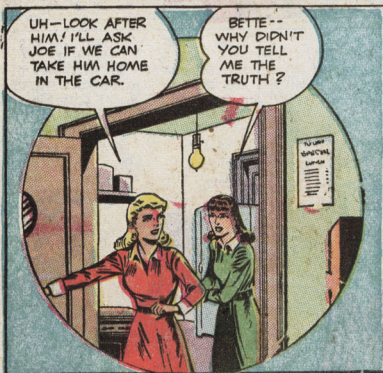
I WALKED HIM FRANTICALLY AWAY FROM THE BUILDING TALKING EVERY MINUTE, TRYING DESPERATELY TO DISKURT THE SLIGHTEST HINT OF RECOLLECTED EVENTS...



WHAT IF HE REMEMBERED THE PAST.. AND THERE WERE NO PLACE FOR ME IN HIS LIFE? NO--THAT MUSTN'T BE!



WITH EACH STEP CLOSER TO JOE'S, MARK'S PALENESS BECAME MORE PRONOUNCED, AND ONCE IN BACK OF THE PLACE HE PASSED OUT. FEARFULLY, I KNELT TO REVIVE HIM, WHEN...



I HAD DELIBERATELY CONCEALED THE NATURE OF MARK'S ILLNESS--WELL--KNOWING WHAT NAN'S REACTION WOULD BE, AND AFTER WE MADE MARK COMFORTABLE BACK HOME, AND HE DOZED FITFULLY, NAN EXPRESSED HERSELF IN NO UNCERTAIN MANNER--

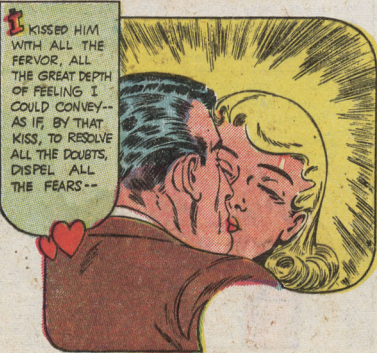


SWEETHEARTS

BUT MY ADAMANT HEART WOULD HEED NO CAUTION THAT WAS A THREAT TO MY NEW-FOUND LOVE. OVER AND OVER, I MUTTERED THE WORDS: "HE'S MINE! AND SO HE'LL REMAIN!" BLOTING OUT ALL LOGIC, ALL CONSIDERATION FOR OTHERS THAN MYSELF!



IN THE MORNING, I STARTED TO LOOK FOR OTHER LODGINGS AND ANOTHER JOB. IT WOULD TAKE TIME AND MEANWHILE, THINGS WENT ON AS BEFORE.

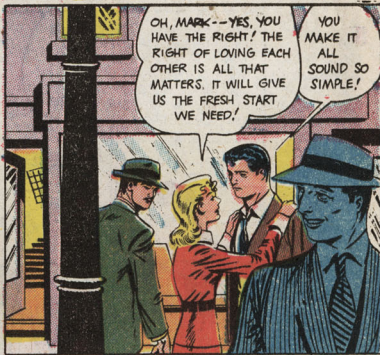


SWEETHEARTS

BUT INSTEAD, THE WORRY AND TENSION GREW. THERE WAS NO JOB FOR MARK. HIS APPEARANCE SUFFERED AS DID HIS SPIRITS. BUT NOW, MORE THAN EVER, I WOULD NOT CONSIDER THE HOSPITAL. HE LOVED ME COMPLETELY--I WAS HIS LIFE! ONE MORNING, AS MARK AND I WENT UPTOWN TO HUNT JOBS---



LET ME BE THE ONE TO SAY IT, DARLING. I DO WANT TO MARRY YOU--BUT THE WAY THINGS ARE NOW, I HAVE NO RIGHT TO ASK YOU!



YOU MAKE IT ALL SOUND SO SIMPLE!

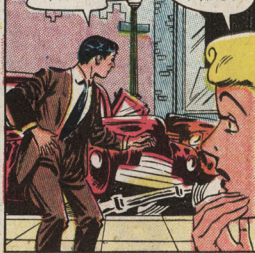
AND LET'S NOT WAIT, MARK! WE CAN GO DOWN TO THE MARRIAGE LICENSE BUREAU RIGHT AWAY!

OKAY, HONEY. --I GUESS I'D BE A FOOL TO MUFF THE CHANCE!

EACH JOYOUS STEP BROUGHT ME CLOSER TO THE REALIZATION OF MY FONDEST DREAM, MY MOST PERVENT PRAYER, SOON MARK WOULD BE MINE FOREVER AND EVER! THEN AS WE PASSED THE SCENE OF A CAR ACCIDENT, MARK BECAME RIGIDLY TENSE--

BURKE WAS AT THE WHEEL! WE TURNED DOWN MADISON AND LANE. I CALLED TO HIM--

MARK! MARK--WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?



I DON'T KNOW! THERE'S SOMETHING I'M BEGINNING TO REMEMBER! MY HEAD--IT PAINS SO TERRIBLY!

DARLING--LOCK THE THOUGHTS OUT OF YOUR MIND! DON'T LET IT BEWILDER YOU. WE MUST THINK ONLY OF EACH OTHER!

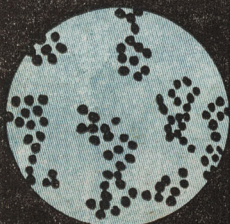
THE BLOOD DRAINED FROM MARK'S FACE, AND HIS EYES BECAME GLAZED AND MISTY. I FELT HIM SHUDDER AS I TOOK HIS ARM, AND SUDDENLY HIS ENTIRE BODY BECAME LIMP--

MARK, COME--WE MUST GO TO THE MARRIAGE LICENSE BUREAU... MARK!

I CAN'T MOVE... I CAN'T!



KILL THESE HAIR-DESTROYING GERMS



Staphylococcus albus



Corynebacterium acnes



Pityrosporum ovale

SAVE YOUR HAIR

Beware of your itchy scalp, hair loss, dandruff, head scales, unpleasant head odors! Nature may be warning you of approaching baldness. Heed Nature's warning! Treat your scalp to scientifically prepared Ward's Formula.

Millions of trouble-breeding bacteria, living on your sick scalp (see above) are killed on contact. Ward's Formula kills not one, but *all 3* types of these destructive scalp germs now recognized by many medical authorities as a significant cause of baldness. Kill these germs—don't risk letting them kill your hair growth.

ENJOY THESE 5 BENEFITS IMMEDIATELY

1. Kills germs that retard normal hair growth—*on contact*
2. Removes ugly infectious dandruff—*fast*
3. Brings hair-nourishing blood to scalp—*quickly*
4. Stops annoying scalp itch and burn—*instantly*
5. Starts wonderful self-massaging action—*within 3 seconds*

Once you're bald, that's *it*, friends! There's nothing you can do. Your hair is gone forever. So are your chances of getting it back. But Ward's Formula, used as directed, keeps your sick scalp free of itchy dandruff, seborrhea, and stops the hair loss they cause. Almost at once your hair looks thicker, more attractive and alive.

We don't ask you to believe *us*. Thousands of men and women—first skeptical just as you are—have *proved* what we say. Here's our **GUARANTEE**. Try Ward's Formula in your own home for only 10 days. You must enjoy *all* the benefits we claim—or we return not only the price you pay—but **DOUBLE YOUR MONEY BACK** on return of unused portion. You are the judge. Send no money. Pay postman only \$2 plus a few cents postage, or save postage by sending \$2 with order. **ACT NOW TO SAVE YOUR HAIR. SEND COUPON TODAY!**

WARD LABORATORIES, Dept. 6607-B

19 West 44th St. New York 36, N. Y.

☐ I enclose \$2.00, send prepaid

☐ Send C.O.D., I will pay \$2.00 plus postage

Name

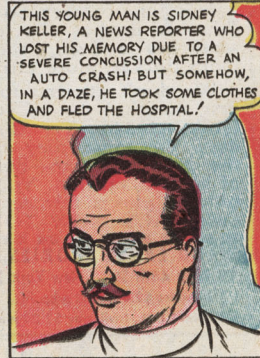
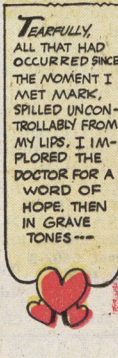
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DOUBLE MONEY BACK GUARANTEE

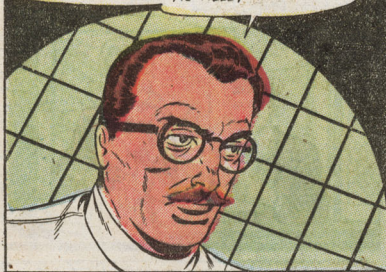
SWEETHEARTS

I NEVER KNEW THE REAL MEANING OF FEAR AND DESPERATION... UNTIL THAT MOMENT. ON THE THRESHOLD OF THE GREATEST EVENT OF MY LIFE--I WAS SUDDENLY IN DANGER OF LOSING EVERYTHING. FRANTICALLY, I TRIED TO AWAKEN HIM BEFORE IT WAS TOO LATE...

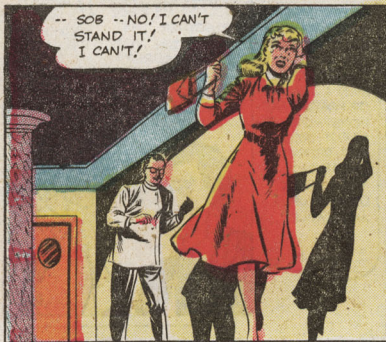


SWEETHEARTS

IF HE HAD BEEN RETURNED TO THE HOSPITAL AND TREATED, ALL MIGHT HAVE BEEN VERY SIMPLE! BUT IN YOUR IGNORANCE AND IN YOUR SELFISHNESS, YOU PUT HIM THROUGH A TERRIBLE MENTAL ORDEAL... AND A PHYSICAL STRAIN AS WELL!



-- SOB -- NO! I CAN'T STAND IT!
I CAN'T!



I FELL NUMBLY, EXHAUSTEDLY, UPON THE HOSPITAL STAIRS-- AND THERE I REMAINED UNTIL THE FIRST GRAY STREAKS OF DAWN. THE ANGUISH WAS SO GREAT THAT I FELT IF I DID NOT RELEASE IT--I COULD NO LONGER LIVE. IN A WAY I SHALL NEVER KNOW, I MADE MY WAY BACK TO NAN'S...

OH, NAN--! SOB YOU WERE SO RIGHT! WHY DIDN'T I LISTEN TO YOU.. WHY? I LOVED HIM SO, AND I ENDANGERED HIS VERY LIFE!

I HAD HOPED YOU WOULD COME TO UNDERSTAND BEFORE ANYTHING LIKE THIS HAPPENED!



I VISITED THE HOSPITAL EVERY DAY, OFTEN SEVERAL TIMES A DAY, ASKING ABOUT HIM. IN TIME, HE PASSED A CRISIS AND WAS ON THE ROAD TO RECOVERY. BUT I NEVER ASKED TO SEE HIM--I DESERVED TO BE NOTHING MORE THAN A FORGOTTEN MEMORY!

HE'S COMING ALONG VERY WELL NOW. DO YOU WANT TO GO UP? HE MAY SEE VISITORS NOW!

NO--NO THANK YOU!



... SOB... IF ANYTHING HAPPENS TO HIM-- SOB -- I SHALL NEVER BE ABLE TO LIVE WITH THE THOUGHT!

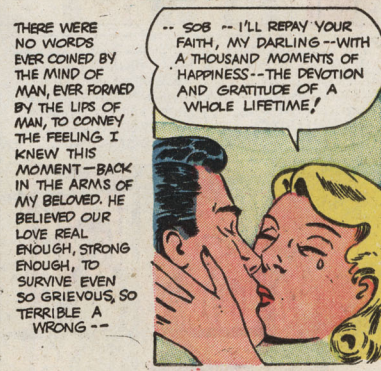
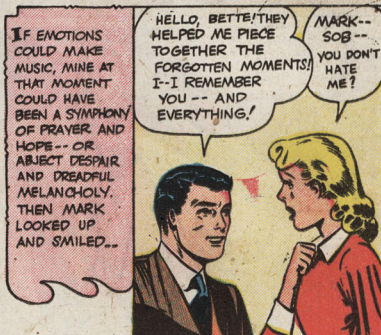
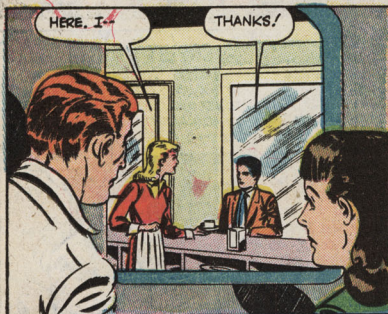
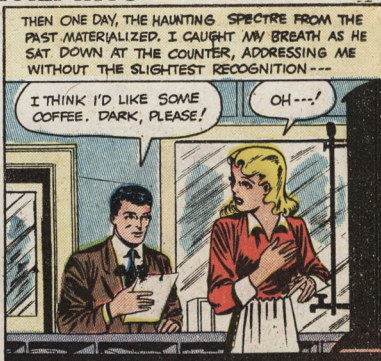
YOU SHOULD HAVE KNOWN THAT INEVITABLY HE'D REMEMBER. YOU SHOULD HAVE HAD FAITH IN THE STRENGTH OF YOUR LOVE AND TRIED TO RECALL THE PAST FOR HIM!



SWEETHEARTS

AND SO THE MANY MONTHS PASSED, AND I LIVED THROUGH SEVERAL LIFETIMES OF TORMENT AND SELF-REPROACH.

I WENT BACK TO WORK AT JOE'S AND TRIED FUTILELY TO FORGET THE DEEP, IRREPARABLE RENT IN MY HEART!



SWEETHEARTS

IT HAPPENED A MONTH BEFORE MY HUSBAND AND I WERE MARRIED... HE'D BEEN SORT OF TAKING ME FOR GRANTED AND OUR...

LOVE WAS AT A STANDSTILL



I'D ALWAYS VALUED MY MOTHER'S ADVICE, SO I TOOK MY PROBLEM TO HER...

WHAT SHALL I DO, MOM? I CAN'T GO ON LIKE THIS...

WELL, BETTY... I'LL TELL YOU HOW ONE GIRL DID IT... A GIRL FROM MY HOME TOWN... I KNEW HER WELL.



"SHE FELL IN LOVE WITH A BOY WHO WAS GOING STEADY WITH ANOTHER GIRL... BUT THAT DIDN'T STOP HER!"

LOOK AT HER FLIRT WITH JIM... HE'S NANCY'S BOY FRIEND!

IT'S DISGRACEFUL! AND LOOK HOW HER SLICK FLATTERY IS DAZZLING HIM!



"WELL, BETTY, JIM FINALLY INVITED HER OUT. SHE WAS QUITE ATTRACTIVE, AND SHE USED ALL HER CHARM TO TRAP HIM!"

"JIM FORGOT ABOUT THE OTHER GIRL--BUT THE FOLKS IN TOWN DIDN'T..."

ISN'T SHE BRAZEN... POOR NANCY IS HEART BROKEN...

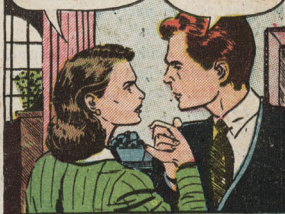
I NEVER HEARD OF ANYTHING SO HIGH HANDED!



"SOON THE GIRL KNEW JIM WAS IN LOVE WITH HER...SO WHEN HE WAS SLOW ABOUT PROPOSING, SHE POPPED THE QUESTION!"

I'M GOING TO GIVE YOU ONE WEEK TO SET A DATE... IF YOU DON'T, WE'RE THROUGH!

LISTEN... MEN. USUALLY DO THE PROPOSING!



"HE HATED THE ULTIMATUM... BUT HE KNEW HER WELL ENOUGH TO KNOW SHE MEANT IT...AND HE DIDN'T WANT TO LOSE HER!"

I JUST CAN'T BELIEVE A GIRL COULD BE SO BRAZEN, SO BOLD...

IT'S A TRUE STORY, BETTY!



WELL, HE MARRIED HER, AND AS FAR AS I KNOW, HE'S NEVER REGRETTED IT!

I THINK HER CONDUCT WAS DISGRACEFUL!



...IT'S THE STORY OF HOW I MARRIED YOUR FATHER!



JANET GATES

The End

BELLE OF THE BALL

By Anne Fielding



THE fog rolled across the land, and all but blotted Main Street from view before Sue Ellen Jensen could reach the door of Mrs. Cook's Dress Shop. A slim, attractive girl with wavy black hair and bright blue eyes, she crossed the street gingerly, and stepped into the shop. "It's a good thing I wasn't caught on the road, Mrs. Cook. Gracious, did you ever see such fog!"

"Better now than this evening," Mrs. Cook nodded. "Fog tonight would break the heart of just about every girl in town. Your dress isn't quite ready yet. But if you'll call back in an hour—"

"It will be ready then, won't it?" Her eyes flashing, Sue Ellen darted a quick look at the chartreuse evening gown hanging on the rack near Mrs. Cook's workroom. "I have to look prettier at the party tonight than I've ever looked in my life."

"To show Andrew Williamson what he's going to miss when he marries Joan Lewis?" Plump Mrs. Cook shook her gray head disapprovingly. "I must say that you're taking this very badly. It isn't exactly a crime for a man to marry the girl he loves."

"He's mine! She had no right to steal him from me! He's mine and he's going to remain mine!"

Sue Ellen spun angrily around and rushed back into the fog. But it was impossible to outrun the memory, the deep sense of loss. Andy's words drummed through her mind. "*She's more my type, Sue Ellen. She's the girl I want to marry. Deep down inside I think I've always wanted to marry her.*"

No apologies. No reference to all the walks and kisses and soft, thrilling words in the moonlight. "*I'll love you forever, Sue Ellen,*" he had said. And forever had lasted only a few months!

Her mood as gray as the fog, she turned the corner into Vine Street and stepped purposefully into Bill Caldwell's real estate office. Her eyes went to his tanned, obstinate face and her mood became grayer than ever. "You

didn't call. I waited and waited, but you didn't call."

"I've been busy." Slim, athletic, he rose and seated her in a chair. "As a matter of fact I doubt that I can take you to the party. Business, business, business. I'm sorry."

"Bill Caldwell, if you let me down I'll never speak to you again!"

And she meant it, too. That was as obvious as her intention to break up the party Joan Lewis' aunt was giving the soon-to-be-married couple.

"It's anger, not genuine disappointment," he said after a long silence, his voice husky. "It's the crazy notion you have that Andrew has publicly humiliated you. You don't love him. You just resent the fact that he tossed you aside for Joan. Sue Ellen, what are you doing to yourself? Before all this happened you were the finest girl in the village. And now—"

"If you don't take me to that party, Bill Caldwell, I shall never speak to you again or even look at you again. That's a promise."

SHE whirled and darted for a door, but a firm hand held her fast in her tracks. "Listen to me," he said. "We used to have a lot of good times together. Until Andrew came along with his good looks and glamour we even used to talk about the day when we would be married. I haven't changed. And you, the *real* you, haven't changed. If you'd just understand that the real happiness is found in love, not in good looks, not in glamour, you would have everything you've ever dreamed of having."

"You have no right to imply I'm a silly, romantic child who doesn't know her own heart." She wrenched free of his grasp and opened the door. "Well, are you taking me to the party or aren't you? Yes or no?"

He slumped onto the desk, pain gleaming briefly in his dark eyes. "I don't think you should go to the party. But that won't make you change your mind. You'll go if you have to go alone. And then — very well, I'll take you."

"Bill!" She rose on the tips of her toes and gave him a quick kiss on his cheek. "Bill, you *darling*." Deliriously happy, she rushed back to Mrs. Cook's Dress Shop. Andrew Williamson would regret every single one of those kisses he'd got with his cheap lies, his promises he hadn't intended to keep . . .

"Will you regret being so stupid?" Sue Ellen." The question, asked by her mother as Sue Ellen was about to leave the house in answer to the tooting of Bill's horn, caught the girl by surprise. "Regret it? But, but why? He's the one who cheated, not I."

Her mother nodded toward Bill sitting in the roadster. "He won't wait forever. Nor will he want to marry a girl who behaves like a dog in the manger. I must say that the way you have been acting is a great disappointment to me, dear."

"Mom, you don't understand."

"Perhaps not. Perhaps it takes a special kind of woman to understand and forgive girls who want to stand between people and happiness. You won't listen to me, dear. But I'll tell you this: Bill Caldwell is one of the finest men in the village. You loved him before Andrew Williamson came along to open his surveyor's office and you'll love him for as long as you live. I know you. I know you better than you know yourself."

"RIDICULOUS," Sue Ellen tossed her lovely young head and hurried out to the car. She peered sidelong at Bill as he drove toward the house of Joan Lewis' aunt.

Love him? She started to laugh but something in the set of his jaw stilled that laughter. She shook her head, sighing. "It isn't what you think, Bill. It just isn't. In my way I love Andrew with all my heart."

"Do you?" He smiled wryly as he halted the car before the house. The soft strains of a waltz flooded through the opened windows to fill the night with rich sound. He looked into her eyes, then moved suddenly to take her into his arms. A startled, angry cry came from her throat. "Bill!"

And then there was another voice in the evening, a soft, romantic voice. "Glad to see you, folks. I was hoping the two of you would show up. Welcome to the ball."

Sue Ellen, her heart throbbing strangely, stared at Bill a long moment, then turned in

great confusion to face Andrew, an Andrew resplendent in dark evening trousers and a beautifully-fitted white evening jacket. "Hello, Andy. I—I—Bill and I were just—"

"I know." His eyes soft, he turned as a rosy-faced Joan came out of the house, turned and put his arm around her waist and drew her to him. "That's love, isn't it, darling?"

The girl's smile was the most beautiful smile Sue Ellen had ever seen. Love. The beauty of love! Love that made the world a decent place in which to live. Suddenly a great wave of shame broke over her. And she, she had been thinking of fighting that love, of trying to destroy that love. Tears of self-disgust welled to her eyes. "Bill," she mumbled, "Bill—"

Looking at her face he nodded and started the car. Through the warm, moonlight night they swept for what seemed to be hours. One hand on the wheel, the other holding hers he sat quietly until the storm of tears had abated. Then, smiling, he halted the car and took her into his arms.

"It's all right Sue Ellen. You did no harm. They'll never know that you intended to injure them, and when we go back you'll be the belle of the ball. You'll see. No one will ever know."

"I—I was such a child. Bill, did you see how beautiful they were? They were so—so happy. I couldn't destroy that happiness."

"You couldn't destroy it because you knew what that happiness was, because you were feeling it, too. Isn't that the truth?"

She stared. "In your arms—I—Bill, I—"

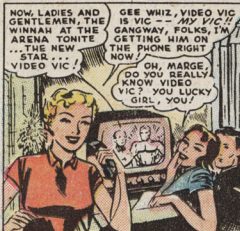
HIS lips came down, warm, thrilling lips that struck music from her heart again, and reminded her of the joy she'd always found with him before Andrew came along. But it was more than just joy now. Her eyes rounding, she drew back and gaped. "Bill, Bill!"

"Yes, my belle of the ball, that's love."

"Darling," she whispered, "Oh, my darling!"

Overhead the moon seemed to smile in approval.

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I Lived in the Past

RUTH FELT AN AFFINITY FOR THE PAST--LIFE AS LIVED IN THE OLDEN DAYS SUGGESTED ROMANCE AND GRACEFUL LIVING TO HER.

WHEN RUTH BEGAN TO TEAR DOWN THE PILLARS OF OUR PRESENT-DAY CIVILIZATION IN HER SEARCH FOR ANOTHER MODE OF LIFE, SHE UNWITTINGLY SENT THE ONE REAL, VIBRANT THING SHE POSSESSED CRASHING DOWN WITH IT--THE LOVE THAT COULD HAVE BEEN HERS, BUT WAS CRUSHED IN THE DEBRIS OF A FORGOTTEN AGE!



LIVING IN THOSE DAYS MUST HAVE BEEN SO THRILLING AND ROMANTIC. (SIGHHH) I GUESS I WAS BORN ABOUT FIVE HUNDRED YEARS TOO LATE!



MY REVERIES WERE SUDDENLY INTERRUPTED BY THE OFFICE MANAGER, AND I CLOSED THE MAGAZINE, RELUCTANT TO LEAVE MY DAY-DREAMS OF THE ELEGANT PAST.....

MEL WARREN, OUR NEW SALESMAN, WHO'S TAKING OVER THIS TERRITORY, WANTS TO GET SOME LETTERS OFF. WILL YOU HELP HIM OUT, RUTH? HE'S IN MISS KORCH'S OFFICE.

ALL--
RIGHT--!



I SUPPOSE HE'S ONE OF THOSE FAST-TALKING, GLIB TYPES I CAN'T STAND. ALL THEY CAN TALK ABOUT IS FIGURES AND SALES AND THE LIKE. ALL RIGHT, MR. MEL WARREN--HERE I COME!



SWEETHEARTS

BUT WHEN I SAW MEL WARREN, IT WAS ONLY WITH DIFFICULTY THAT I WAS ABLE TO RESTRAIN A GASP OF ADMIRATION. HE SEEMED TO LACK ONLY THE SUIT OF ARMOR AND PRANCING STEED OF A SHINING KNIGHT OUT OF ONE OF THE BOOKS I HAD LATELY BEEN ABSORBED IN...

IT'S GOOD OF YOU TO HELP ME OUT, RUTH. I'VE BEEN TRYING TO GET THIS TERRITORY FOR A LONG TIME, AND I HAVE TO CONTACT SOME OF OUR BIG ACCOUNTS AND MAKE APPOINTMENTS. SO, WHENEVER YOU'RE READY---

WE--WE CAN START RIGHT IN!



I THRILLED TO MEL'S DEEP, RESONANT VOICE AS HE DICTATED EASILY, WITHOUT PAUSE, AND BEFORE I WAS AWARE OF IT, THE HOURS HAD FLOWN BY....

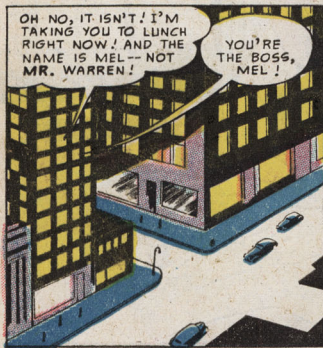
TWO O'CLOCK! YOU--YOU'VE MISSED YOUR LUNCH HOUR, RUTH. I--I'M TERRIBLY SORRY! I HAD NO IDEA!

THAT'S ALL RIGHT, MR. WARREN!



OH NO, IT ISN'T! I'M TAKING YOU TO LUNCH RIGHT NOW! AND THE NAME IS MEL--NOT MR. WARREN!

YOU'RE THE BOSS, MEL!



MEL TOOK ME TO A SMALL INTIMATE RESTAURANT, AND WHEN I SAW THAT THE MEALS WERE SERVED BY CANDLELIGHT, I SENSED A KINDRED SOUL IN HIM....

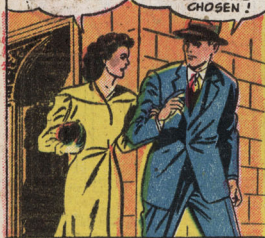
DON'T YOU LOVE THIS ATMOSPHERE? CANDLES ARE SO MUCH NICER THAN HARSH, GLARING ELECTRIC LIGHTS! IT'S SO SOOTHING--!

OH, I SUPPOSE IT'S NICE TO EAT BY CANDLELIGHT ONCE IN A WHILE, BUT I'D HATE TO LIVE WITH IT ALL MY LIFE. JUST IMAGINE WORKING AND READING BY CANDLES!



WELL--I CAN'T AGREE WITH YOU. IT COULDN'T HAVE BEEN SO TERRIBLE WORKING WITH CANDLES, ABRAHAM LINCOLN STUDIED BY IT.

HE DIDN'T HAVE MUCH OF A CHOICE. BUT IF HE HAD--THERE'S NO DOUBT IN MY MIND WHICH WISE OLD ABE WOULD HAVE CHOSEN!



BUT I DIDN'T TAKE YOU TO LUNCH TO DEBATE THE RELATIVE MERITS OF CANDLES AND ELECTRICITY. HOW ABOUT YOU ACTING AS MY GUIDE AROUND THIS TOWN? I'M ASKING FOR A DATE TONIGHT.

AFTER SUCH A NICE LUNCH--HOW CAN I REFUSE?



I IMPATIENTLY WAITED FOR MEL IN MY SMALL ATTIC APARTMENT THAT NIGHT, AND THE SOUND OF THE BELL BREATHLESSLY BROUGHT ME TO THE DOOR....

IT'S THAT MAN AGAIN WITH A BOUQUET FOR THE FAIREST FLOWER IN TOWN!

OH, MEL--THAT IS SWEET!



SWEETHEARTS

THE FLOWER GESTURE SEEMED TO CONFIRM MY INITIAL IMPRESSION OF MEL. NO--HE WASN'T LIKE THE OTHERS I HAD MET. HERE WAS A YOUNG LOCHINVAR WHO HAD ALREADY STOLEN MY HEART. AS HE STOOPED TO PIN ON THE CORSAGE, I FELT A KINSHIP WITH THE CHIVALRY THAT FLOURISHED MANY, MANY YEARS AGO...

I FEEL AS IF I WERE BACK IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY, MEL--! SOMEHOW YOU MAKE THOSE DAYS COME ALIVE FOR ME. MAYBE IT'S THE FLOWERS!

I GUESS FELLOWS HAVE BEEN GIVING FLOWERS TO THEIR GIRLS EVER SINCE--WELL, EVER SINCE THERE WERE FELLOWS AND GIRLS AND FLOWERS.



WELL, WHAT'S THE FIRST STOP? WANT TO SHOW ME THE CITY HALL?

OH NO--THERE'S A WONDERFUL MOVIE PLAYING AT THE PALACE. IT'S A HISTORICAL ROMANCE IN A SIXTEENTH CENTURY SETTING. I'D LOVE TO SEE IT.



ONCE INSIDE THE MOVIE HOUSE, I BECAME COMPLETELY ABSORBED IN THE ATMOSPHERE OF THE PICTURE AND NOT UNTIL THE FILM WAS OVER AND WE LEFT THE THEATRE DID THE HARSH SOUNDS OF PRESENT DAY LIVING AWAKEN ME TO REALITY...

WEREN'T THINGS WONDERFUL IN THOSE DAYS? THE CASTLES--AND THE COUNTS--AND LADIES--!

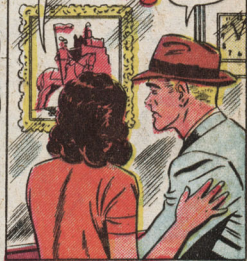
WELL--I SUPPOSE THEY DIDN'T HAVE IT TOO BAD, BUT THE MAJORITY LIVED IN ABJECT POVERTY, RUTH. AS A MATTER OF FACT, THE VERY PEOPLE YOU ENVIED THEN DIDN'T ENJOY THE STANDARD OF LIVING WE DO TODAY!



MEL'S INDIFFERENT DISMISSAL OF THE LIFE I ENVIED ALMOST PROVOKED AN ANGRY HOT RETORT. THEN MY EYE CAUGHT SIGHT OF A PICTURE IN A SMALL ART STORE WE WERE PASSING... A PICTURE THAT SEEMED LIKE A SYMBOL OF THE MOOD I WAS TRYING TO CAPTURE...

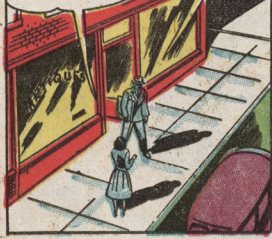
LOOK--THAT KNIGHT ON THE HORSE, ISN'T IT --BEAUTIFUL!

IF YOU ENJOY IT SO MUCH--YOU SHALL HAVE IT! COME ON IN!



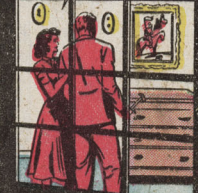
OH, THANK YOU, MEL--I--I'LL NEVER FORGET IT. I'M SO ANXIOUS TO SEE IT ON MY WALL. COME--WE'LL PUT IT UP RIGHT NOW!

LUCKY YOU! I'M THE BEST LITTLE PICTURE HANGER YOU EVER SAW!



PRESENTLY...

IT--IT'S SO BOLD AND DASHING! I'LL NEVER FORGET TODAY--THE DAY I GOT IT!



I'VE REASON TO REMEMBER TODAY, TOO--RUTH. IT'S THE DAY I MET YOU--THE LOVELIEST GIRL I'VE EVER KNOWN!



SWEETHEARTS

THERE WERE OTHER DATES WITH MEL AFTER THAT, WONDERFULLY HAPPY MOMENTS I COUNTED AS GOLDEN COINS IN THE TREASURY OF MY HEART.

ONE DAY, AFTER MEL RETURNED FROM A SHORT ROAD TRIP....

TAKE A LETTER, YOUNG LADY. "DEAR RUTH--THE OFFICE IS HAVING ITS ANNUAL GET-TOGETHER THIS SATURDAY, AND I'D LIKE NOTHING BETTER THAN TO HAVE YOU GO WITH ME."



"MY DEAR MEL--RECEIVED YOUR KIND INVITATION AND AM LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING YOU THIS SATURDAY P.M. AFFECTIONATELY, RUTH."

THE FOLLOWING SATURDAY, I AIRILY FLOATED IN MEL'S ARMS TO THE STRAINS OF SOFT MUSIC....

HAPPY?

UH-HUH!



OHH--I'M SORRY! GUESS THE PLACE IS GETTING CROWDED!

LOOKS LIKE YOU NEED A BALLROOM FOR YOURSELF WITH THOSE DANCE STEPS!



COME ON, RUTH--I'LL TRY TO STEER YOU STRAIGHT NEXT TIME!

NO--I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF THESE PEOPLE'S ACROBATIC GYRATIONS THAT PASS AS DANCING!



JUST LOOK AT THEM--! GIVE ME THE DAYS WHEN THEY HAD THE STATELY MINUET. IT HAD SUCH GRACE, AND THE RHYTHM WAS A FAR CRY FROM THIS!

I GUESS THE OLD MINUET WAS NICE--BUT THE DANCES TODAY HAVE THEIR POINTS, TOO. YOU HAVE EVERYTHING FROM JITTERBUGGING TO A GRACEFUL WALTZ. IT ALL DEPENDS ON TASTE! IF PEOPLE LIKE TO JITTERBUG--LET THEM!



MEL'S CALM RATIONALIZATION INFURIATED ME. EVERYTIME I THOUGHT HE WAS BEGINNING TO BELIEVE AS I DID, HIS WORDS PROVED A CONTRADICTION.....

NO--YOU JUST DON'T SEEM TO UNDERSTAND. I--I THINK I'D LIKE TO LEAVE. I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF THIS PLACE.

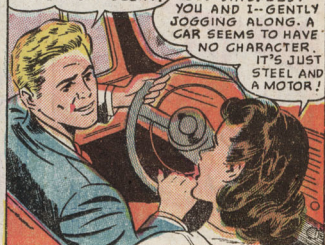
OKAY--LET'S GO!



SOON.....

WHAT ARE YOU THINKING OF, RUTH? LOOKS AS IF YOU'RE HIDING SOME PRECIOUS THOUGHT!

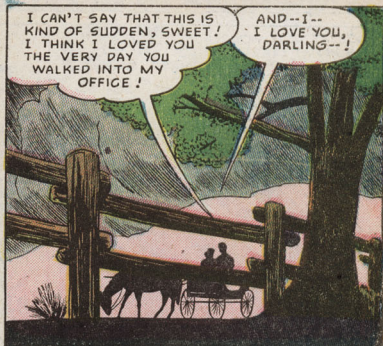
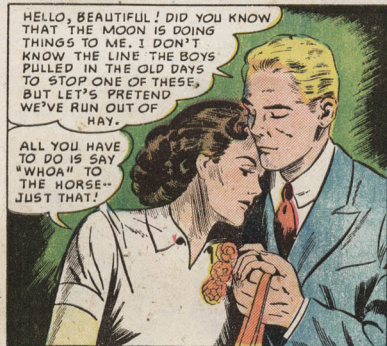
I WAS JUST THINKING HOW NICE IT WOULD BE IF THIS CAR WERE A HORSE AND BUGGY--THE KIND THEY HAD IN THE OLD DAYS. JUST YOU AND I--GENTLY JOGGING ALONG. A CAR SEEMS TO HAVE NO CHARACTER. IT'S JUST STEEL AND A MOTOR!



SWEETHEARTS

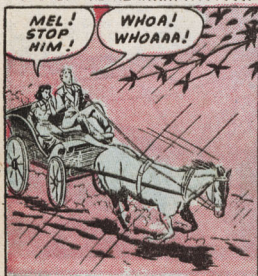


A SHORT WHILE LATER, WE WERE TROTTING THROUGH THE PARK. THE MUSICAL CLIP-CLOP OF THE HORSE SEEMED TO FULFILL A ROMANTIC INTERLUDE I HAD LONG LOOKED FORWARD TO



SWEETHEARTS

ANOTHER FLASH FOLLOWED IN QUICK SUCCESSION, AND THE HORSE BOLTED AND STARTED TO RUN WILDLY IGNORING MEL'S FRANTIC EFFORTS WITH THE REINS TO STOP THE RUNAWAY.....



SWEETHEARTS

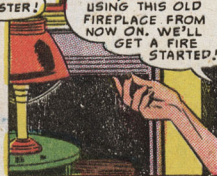
AS THE KEROSENE LAMP CAST ITS DIM GLOW ABOUT THE ROOM, IT REFLECTED THE IN-CREDULOUS EXPRESSION ON MEL'S FACE....

B-BUT HOW CAN YOU LIVE WITH THOSE THINGS WHEN YOU CAN HAVE ALL THE LIGHT YOU WANT BY MERELY FLIPPING A SWITCH.

BUT IT'S ALMOST LIKE SAMPLING THE SLOW, UN-HURRIED, PEA-SOUP DAYS OF OLDEN TIMES! ELECTRICITY ALWAYS REMINDED ME OF SOME MECHANICAL MONSTER!

I-I DON'T GET IT, RUTH. THIS RIDICULOUS WORSHIP FOR THINGS OUTMODED!

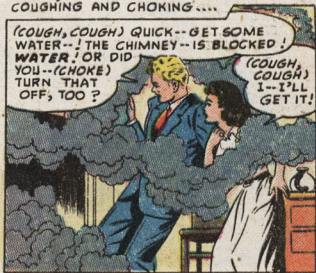
YOU'LL UNDER-
STAND SOME DAY, DEAR. NOW DON'T STAND THERE. YOU CAN'T DRY YOUR CLOTHES ON THE RADIATOR BECAUSE I HAD THAT SHUT OFF, TOO. I'M USING THIS OLD FIREPLACE FROM NOW ON. WE'LL GET A FIRE STARTED!



THE FIREPLACE HAD MERELY BEEN JUST AN ORNAMENT TO ME, BUT NOW I EAGERLY WATCHED MEL EXPERTLY PREPARE TO LIGHT IT, VISUALIZING A ROARING, HEART-WARMING FIRE, BUT INSTEAD OF A BLAZE, BELLOWING SMOKE STARTED US COUGHING AND CHOKING....

(COUGH, COUGH) QUICK--GET SOME WATER--! THE CHIMNEY--IS BLOCKED! WATER! OR DID YOU--(CHOKE) TURN THAT OFF, TOO?

(COUGH, COUGH) I--I'LL GET IT!



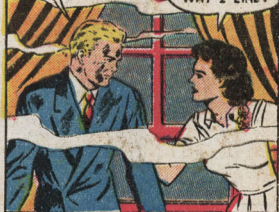
IT WOULD HAVE BEEN MUCH EASIER TO USE A RADIATOR.

I-I GUESS I NEED A CHIMNEY SWEEP. WELL--I GUESS THAT'S ONE OF THE THINGS I HAVE TO PUT UP WITH IF I'M GOING TO HAVE THINGS THE WAY I WANT THEM!

FORTUNATELY, YOU DON'T HAVE TO PUT UP WITH IT. THROUGH THE AGES, MEN HAVE WORKED AND SLAVED AND DIED TO GIVE THE COMFORTS TO CIVILIZATION THAT WE ENJOY TODAY. PEOPLE WHO USED THAT STUFF YOU'RE SO CRAZY ABOUT IN THE OLD DAYS, HAD TO USE IT BECAUSE THEY COULDN'T HELP THEMSELVES!

I LIKE A FIREPLACE JUST AS MUCH AS YOU DO, WHERE AND WHEN IT'S APPROPRIATE! BUT I'M GRATEFUL FOR CENTRAL HEATING TO REALLY WARM UP A PLACE.

D-DON'T BE ANGRY WITH ME, MEL. THESE THINGS ARE A ROMANTIC WAY OF LIFE TO ME--A WAY I LIKE.

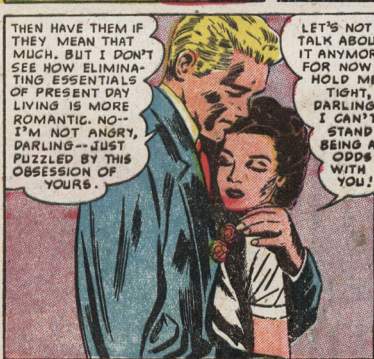


THEN HAVE THEM IF THEY MEAN THAT MUCH. BUT I DON'T SEE HOW ELIMINATING ESSENTIALS OF PRESENT DAY LIVING IS MORE ROMANTIC. NO--I'M NOT ANGRY, DARLING--JUST PUZZLED BY THIS OBSESSION OF YOURS.

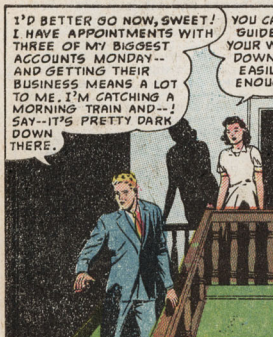
LET'S NOT TALK ABOUT IT ANYMORE FOR NOW! HOLD ME TIGHT, DARLING--I CAN'T STAND BEING AT ODDS WITH YOU!

IF WE'RE REALLY CALLED A TRUGE--LET'S SEAL IT WITH A KISS!

YOU'RE A CAPTIVATING LITTLE DEMON!



SCHEATERS



I'D BETTER GO NOW, SWEET! I HAVE APPOINTMENTS WITH THREE OF MY BIGGEST ACCOUNTS MONDAY-- AND GETTING THEIR BUSINESS MEANS A LOT TO ME. I'M CATCHING A MORNING TRAIN AND--! SAY--IT'S PRETTY DARK DOWN THERE.

YOU CAN GUIDE YOUR WAY DOWN EASILY ENOUGH.



MEL!

CRASH!

WHAM!



DARLING-- ARE--ARE YOU HURT?

MY FOOT---- I CAN'T MOVE IT! BETTER GET-A-DOCTOR!

STUNNED BY MEL'S MISHAP, I DASHED ACROSS THE STREET FOR A DOCTOR, KNOWING FULL WELL THAT MY HAVING THE LIGHTS IN THE HALL TURNED OFF WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ACCIDENT. THE DOCTOR AND I MANAGED TO GET MEL INTO MY ROOM AND....



YOU HAVE A FRACTURED ANKLE, SON! YOU'LL HAVE TO STAY IN BED FOR AT LEAST A WEEK!

A WEEK! B-BUT--I CAN'T--! I'M DUE TO GO ON THE ROAD TOMORROW! MY BUSINESS--!



FORGET ABOUT TRAVELING--OR EVEN MOVING! YOU'LL HAVE TO STAY RIGHT WHERE YOU ARE--OR RISK PERMANENT INJURY TO THAT FOOT!

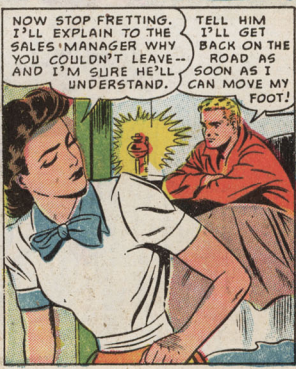
YOU--YOU CAN STAY HERE, DARLING! I CAN DOUBLE UP WITH GRACE WHO LIVES ACROSS THE STREET!

MEL WAS MOROSE AND BITTER ON SUNDAY DESPITE MY FUTILE EFFORTS TO REVIVE HIS SPIRITS. HE WAS PLAGUED BY THE THOUGHT OF LOSING THE BUSINESS HE PLANNED ON. I STOPPED OFF AT THE ROOM ON MONDAY MORNING BEFORE GOING ON TO WORK TO FIND NO CHANGE IN HIS MOOD....



WHAT AM I GOING TO DO HERE ALL DAY? IT'S SO DARK IN THIS PLACE--AND I NEARLY FROZE TO DEATH LAST NIGHT. WHAT DO YOU DO FOR HEAT NOW?

I'LL MAKE A FIRE AND FILL THE KEROSENE LAMPS SO YOU CAN READ, DEAR!



NOW STOP FRETTING. I'LL EXPLAIN TO THE SALES MANAGER WHY YOU COULDN'T LEAVE-- AND I'M SURE HE'LL UNDERSTAND.

TELL HIM I'LL GET BACK ON THE ROAD AS SOON AS I CAN MOVE MY FOOT!



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SWEETHEARTS

EXPLAINING TO THE SALES MANAGER WAS EASY ENOUGH--BUT I WASN'T READY FOR THE CONSEQUENCES OF MY EXPLANATION....

THAT'S REALLY A TOUGH BREAK FOR MEL. HE WORKED HARD FOR THAT TERRITORY WHICH IS ONE OF OUR BEST--BUT I'M AFRAID I'LL HAVE TO TAKE IT AWAY FROM HIM NOW. YOU SEE, UNLESS WE GET A MAN OUT WITH OUR LINE TODAY, WE'LL LOSE OUT TO OUR COMPETITORS. NOBODY IS GOING TO WAIT FOR MEL TO SHOW UP!



FOR THE REST OF THE DAY, I WRACKED MY MIND FOR SOME WAY TO SOFTEN THE BLOW FOR MEL. I WAS STILL DEEP IN THOUGHT AS I MADE MY WAY HOME THAT NIGHT, WHEN THE SIGHT OF SMOKE AND FLAMES POURING FROM MY APARTMENT ROOTED ME FEARFULLY TO THE SPOT...



HELP!
(COUGH)
HELP!

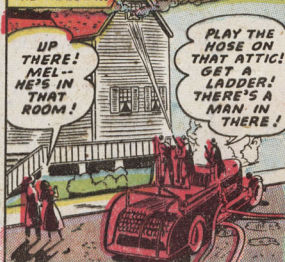
MEL--!



I'LL NEVER KNOW HOW I MADE IT TO THE FIRE BOX ON THE CORNER, BUT IT SEEMED ONLY A MATTER OF SECONDS BEFORE THE SHRIEKING SIRENS OF THE FIRE ENGINES ROARED UP TO THE HOUSE...

UP THERE!
MEL--
HE'S IN THAT ROOM!

PLAY THE HOSE ON THAT ATTIC!
GET A LADDER!
THERE'S A MAN IN THERE!



GET THE OXYGEN MASK! THIS POOR DEVIL IS ALMOST DONE FOR!

THE PLACE IS A FIRE TRAP! KEROSENE LAMPS AND AN OPEN FIREPLACE. ANOTHER MINUTE AND HE WOULD HAVE BURNED TO A CRISP!



THE CLANGING BELL OF THE AMBULANCE THAT RUSHED MEL TO THE HOSPITAL SEEMED TO TOLL THE DEATH OF ALL THE ROMANTIC ILLUSIONS I HAD ABOUT THE PAST. THE FOLLOWING DAY, THEY FINALLY ALLOWED ME IN TO SEE HIM....

HOW--HOW DO YOU FEEL, DARLING?

JUST ABOUT LIVING--NO THANKS TO YOU. I'M GLAD YOU CAME, RUTH. THERE'RE A FEW THINGS I WANT TO STRAIGHTEN OUT.

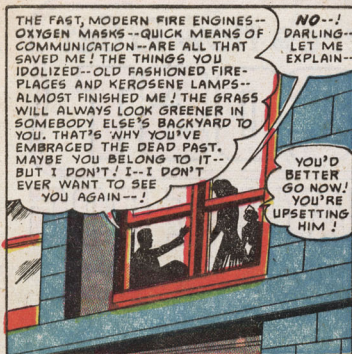


I FOUND OUT THAT I LOST MY TERRITORY--BUT HURTING MY LEG AND LOSING THAT STILL HADN'T OPENED MY EYES UNTIL MY NARROW ESCAPE IN THE FIRE. THE VERY MODERN THINGS YOU SCOFFED AT ARE THE ONLY REASONS I'M HERE ALIVE TODAY.

B-BUT--!



SWEETHEARTS

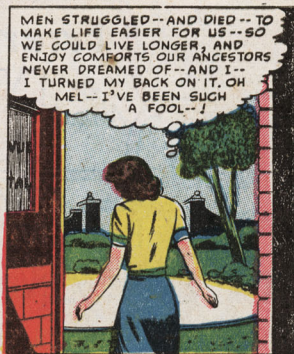


THE FAST, MODERN FIRE ENGINES--OXYGEN MASKS--QUICK MEANS OF COMMUNICATION--ARE ALL THAT SAVED ME! THE THINGS YOU IDOLIZED--OLD FASHIONED FIRE-PLACES AND KEROSENE LAMPS--ALMOST FINISHED ME! THE GRASS WILL ALWAYS LOOK GREENER IN SOMEBODY ELSE'S BACKYARD TO YOU. THAT'S WHY YOU'VE EMBRACED THE DEAD PAST. MAYBE YOU BELONG TO IT-- BUT I DON'T! I--I DON'T EVER WANT TO SEE YOU AGAIN--!

NO--! DARLING-- LET ME EXPLAIN--!

YOU'D BETTER GO NOW! YOU'RE UPSETTING HIM!

IN A DAZE, I WANDERED BACK TOWARD MY APARTMENT, RECALLING THINGS MEL HAD SAID-- WHICH SEEMED TO HAVE BEEN SEARINGLY BRANDED ON MY MIND....



MEN STRUGGLED--AND DIED--TO MAKE LIFE EASIER FOR US--SO WE COULD LIVE LONGER, AND ENJOY COMFORTS OUR ANCESTORS NEVER DREAMED OF--AND I-- I TURNED MY BACK ON IT. OH MEL-- I'VE BEEN SUCH A FOOL--!

THERE WERE PITIFULLY FEW POSSESSIONS OF MINE THAT HAD SURVIVED THE FIRE, AND THE PICTURE OF THE KNIGHT WAS ONE OF THEM. IT WAS LIKE A SYMBOL NOW THAT SEEMED TO MOCK ALL THE DEAD BELIEFS I HAD LIVED BY....



WHAT DID I EVER SEE IN THE DEAD PAST YOU REPRESENT? YOU--YOU'RE DEAD AND--AND I WANT LIFE! I WANT MEL-- AND THE LOVE WE HAD THAT WAS REAL-- SOB...!



WEEKS LATER...

BUT, RUTH-- IT-- IT'S A LOVELY PICTURE! WHY DON'T YOU KEEP IT?

I DON'T WANT IT, HELEN. IT REPRESENTS SOMETHING THAT I NO LONGER BELIEVE IN. BESIDES IT'S OUT OF PLACE IN THE MODERN TERRACE APARTMENT HOUSE I JUST MOVED INTO!



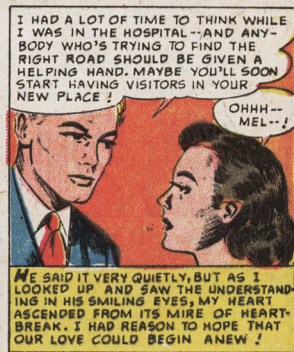
ARE YOU DIVORCING THE KNIGHT FOR GOOD, RUTH?

MEL! IT--IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU BACK AGAIN!



SO YOU'RE LIVING IN THE TERRACE APARTMENTS NOW. THAT'S A FAR CRY FROM THE PAST. IT'S THE MOST MODERN PLACE IN TOWN! HOW COME?

(SOB) YOU--YOU WERE SO RIGHT, MEL. IT WAS WRONG TO RIDICULE THE THINGS THAT HELP MAKE LIFE MORE ENJOYABLE TODAY!



I HAD A LOT OF TIME TO THINK WHILE I WAS IN THE HOSPITAL--AND ANYBODY WHO'S TRYING TO FIND THE RIGHT ROAD SHOULD BE GIVEN A HELPING HAND. MAYBE YOU'LL SOON START HAVING VISITORS IN YOUR NEW PLACE!

OH-- MEL--!

HE SAID IT VERY QUIETLY, BUT AS I LOOKED UP AND SAW THE UNDERSTANDING IN HIS SMILING EYES, MY HEART ASCENDED FROM ITS MIRE OF HEART-BREAK. I HAD REASON TO HOPE THAT OUR LOVE COULD BEGIN ANEW!



Mrs. Ruth Long

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